

REMARKS

The Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for thoroughly reviewing and considering the application. The Official Action dated March 22, 2004 has been received and carefully reviewed. Claims 1-30 are currently pending, where claims 1, 9, 12, 23 and 28 have been amended. Reconsideration of the pending claims is respectfully requested.

The Official Action objected to the drawings as noted therein. The Applicant has amended Figure 14 as indicated in the attachment and submits that the amended Figure overcomes the objection and requests withdrawal of the same.

In addition, the Official Action rejected claims 9-11 and 28-30 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being incomplete for omitting essential structural cooperative relationships of elements where such omission amounts to a gap between necessary structural relationships. As noted above, the Applicant has amended claims 9 and 28 and submits that, as amended, claims 9-11 and 28-30 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, and requests withdrawal of the rejection.

In addition, the Official Action rejected claims 1-30 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by WO 99/26763 to *Katsuoka et al.* (hereinafter “the ‘763 reference”). The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

As required in Chapter 2131 of the M.P.E.P., in order to anticipate a claim under 35 U.S.C. §102, “the reference must teach every element of the claim.” The Applicant respectfully submits that the ‘763 reference does not teach each and every element recited in claims 1-30. The ‘763 reference cannot, therefore, anticipate any of the claims. To further illustrate, claim 1 recites a system for processing objects comprising, among other features, “an object transfer device configured to unload an object from a first one of said plurality of object processing assemblies and to transfer the object to a second one of said plurality of object processing

assemblies.” In addition, claim 23 has been amended to recite, among other features, a system for processing semiconductor objects which includes “an object transfer device configured to unload said objects from the first object processing assembly and to transfer said objects to the second object processing assembly.” The Applicant respectfully submits that the ‘763 reference does not disclose an object transfer device configured to unload and to transfer objects between a first object processing assembly and a second object processing assembly. At best, the ‘763 reference discloses polishing units 10a and 10b and a number of robots 24, 26a and 26b where all the robots 24, 26a and 26b are required to move a wafer to a number of intermediate locations between the polishing units 10a and 10b. See page 12, lines 30-34.

In addition, claim 12 has been amended to recite a method of processing objects comprising “transferring said objects that have been processed by said first object processing assembly to a second object processing assembly wherein an object transfer device is employed for unloading said objects from the first object processing assembly and transferring said objects to the second object processing assembly.” The ‘763 reference does not disclose a method of processing objects where an object transfer device unloads objects from a first object processing assembly and transfers the object to the second object processing assembly. Instead, as previously mentioned, the ‘763 reference discloses a number of transfer robots which transfer a workpiece to a plurality of intermediate locations between polishing units 10a and 10b.

For at least the reasons set forth above, the Applicant submits that the ‘763 reference fails to disclose each and every element recited in claims 1, 12 and 23 as required under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), and requests that the rejection be withdrawn. Claims 2-11, which depend from claim 1; claims 13-22, which depend from claim 12; and claims 24-30, which depend from 23, are also patentable over the ‘763 reference for at least the same reasons.

The Official Action also rejected claims 1-30 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,629,883 to *Katsuoka et al.* (hereinafter “the ‘883 patent”). The Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

The Applicant respectfully submits that the ‘883 patent does not disclose each and every element recited in claims 1-30. As previously discussed, both claims 1 and 23 have been amended to claim an object transfer device configured to unload objects from a first object processing assembly and configured to transfer them to a second object processing assembly. The ‘883 patent does not disclose this feature. In contrast, the ‘883 patent teaches that a first transfer robot 20 transfers a wafer to a reversing device 28L associated with a polishing area C and a second transfer robot 21 transfers a wafer to a reversing device 28R associated with a polishing area D. More specifically, neither of the transfer robots 20 and 21 unload an object (e.g., a wafer) from an object processing assembly (e.g., a polishing area). Additionally, in the ‘883 patent, objects (e.g., wafers) are not transferred from one object processing assembly (e.g., one polishing area) to a second object processing assembly. As such, the ‘883 patent cannot possibly anticipate claim 1 or 23.

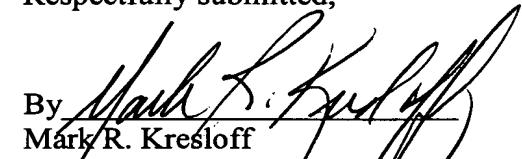
Furthermore, as previously mentioned, claim 12 has been amended to recite a method of processing objects where an object transfer device is employed for unloading objects from a first object processing assembly and transferring the objects to a second object processing assembly. As discussed, the ‘883 patent does not teach this feature. Accordingly, the Applicant submits that the ‘883 patent fails to disclose each and every element recited in claims 1, 12 and 23 as required under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), and requests that the rejection be withdrawn. Claims 2-11, which depend from claim 1; claims 13-22, which depend from claim 12; and claims 24-30, which depend from 23, are also patentable over the ‘883 patent for at least the same reasons.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

The Applicant hereby authorizes the Commissioner of Patents to charge any fees necessary to complete this filing, including any fees required under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 for any necessary Extension of Time to make the filing of the attached documents timely, or credit any overpayment in fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Further, if these papers are not considered timely filed, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 for the necessary extension of time.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments

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ANNOTATED SHEET SHOWING CHANGES

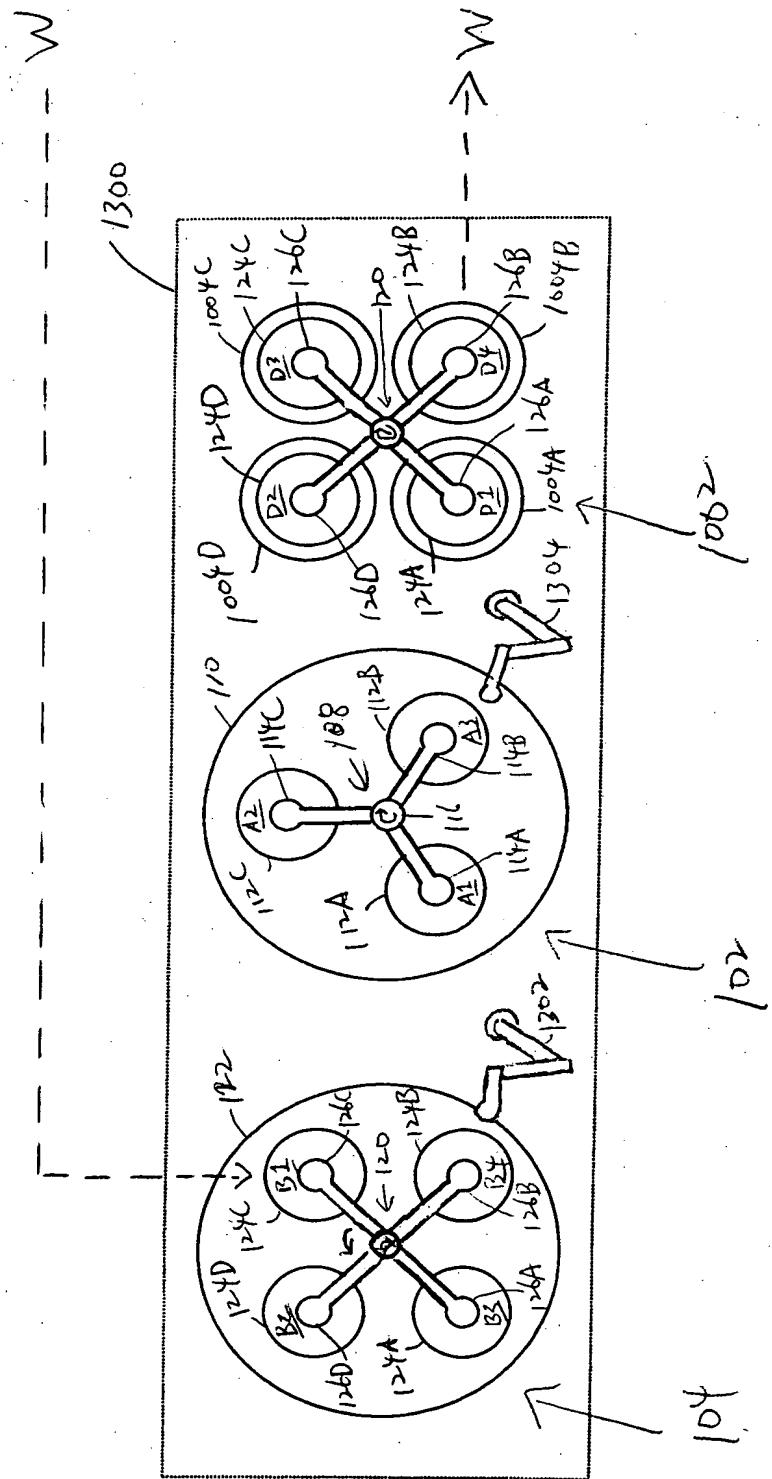


Fig. 14